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August is National Immunization Awareness Month

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Best Way to Fight the Flu? Get the Vaccine!

Meditation, exercise also cut down on respiratory infections and missed workdays in a study group.

As flu season gets underway, many people look for ways to avoid this miserable illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say getting a flu vaccine is the single best way to protect yourself. Millions of Americans took the advice and got a flu vaccine last season. If you did, do you need to get one this year?

"Yes", the CDC says, because each flu season is different. While 2011 was a relatively mild season, influenza is unpredictable. In 2009-2010, we saw a global epidemic of the H1N1 (or swine flu) virus. Flu viruses are constantly changing and the vaccine is adapted each year to fight new strains.

Furthermore, you may be doing your family and co-workers a favor. If more people are vaccinated, fewer outbreaks can be expected.

Health officials recommend influenza vaccines early in the season for anyone over 6 months old. The season runs roughly from October through May, but you can get the flu anytime during the year.

The CDC urges pregnant women to get the vaccine. Those with asthma, diabetes and chronic lung disease are also at higher risk for the flu, as are older people and young children. Antibodies take about two weeks to develop in the body and protect against the virus.

The flu virus is associated with as many as 49,000 deaths a year, according to the CDC. Illness from flu sends more than 200,000 people to the hospital each year.

The flu virus spreads from person to person. It most commonly spreads through tiny drops of infected fluid when we talk, sneeze or cough. Frequent hand-washing with soap and warm water can help keep germs at bay.

Tips for Avoiding the Flu

Health officials suggest other tips for avoiding the flu:

- Try not to rub your eyes, nose or mouth. This is one way germs can spread.
- Try not to have close contact with sick people.
- Get plenty of sleep and exercise.
- Control your stress levels.
- Drink enough fluids, and eat healthy meals so you don't get run down.
- Use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Don't use the tissue again.
- If you think you have the flu, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without using fever-reducing aids.

If you are exposed to the flu, or if you are caring for someone with the flu, ask your doctor about preventive antiviral medications. While they are not right for everyone, quick treatment with an antiviral can help ward off the flu or make it go away faster. Antiviral drugs may be up to 90 percent effective at preventing the flu, health officials say.

Some employers offer free or reduced-cost flu shots. These are often provided through visiting nurse agencies and other occupational health providers. In addition to your doctor's office, your pharmacy, school, community center or urgent care center may also offer flu shots. You could save money when you compare the cost of the shot to a doctor's visit.

A new study published in the *Annals of Family Medicine* suggests you might get an edge on respiratory illnesses like cold and flu if you exercise moderately or engage in meditation.

In a small study group at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, these two activities substantially cut down on the number of sicknesses and missed workdays.

Researchers studied about 150 participants age 50 and older. They were not already doing meditation or moderate exercise. Most were women. Researchers broke them into three groups:

- One group—performing meditation for 45 minutes per day
- One group—doing moderate exercise for 45 minutes per day
- One group—no change in their habits

The study participants were asked to report respiratory illness or days missed from work due to these conditions. The exercise group had the lowest number of days feeling sick, and the meditation group had by far the fewest sick days.

"The results are remarkable. We saw a 40-50 percent reduction in respiratory infections," says lead author Dr. Bruce Barrett. He acknowledges more research is needed before drawing a cause-and-effect conclusion.

The best precaution, health officials say, is to get a flu vaccine every year. That way you know you're getting protection from the most recent variations of the virus.

Immunizations—General Overview

Immunization (vaccination) is a way to trigger your immune system and prevent serious, life-threatening diseases.

Information

Our bodies are designed to protect us from infections. When you are exposed to a virus or bacteria, your immune system actually learns from the experience. The next time your body is exposed to the same infection, your immune system often recognizes it and sets out to destroy it.

Immunization exposes you to a very small, very safe amount of the most important infections. This exposure helps your immune system recognize and attack the infection and prevent the disease it may cause. If you are exposed to the full-blown disease later in life, you will either not become infected or have a much milder infection. This is a natural way to deal with infectious diseases.

After immunizations were introduced on a wide scale, infections such as tetanus, diphtheria, mumps, measles, pertussis (whooping cough), and polio became rare. Newer immunizations have also decreased certain types of meningitis, pneumonia, and ear infections in children.

Four different types of vaccines are currently available.

- 1. Attenuated (weakened) live virus** is used in the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine and the varicella (chicken pox) vaccine. These vaccines may cause serious infections in people with weakened immune systems.
- 2. Killed (inactivated) viruses or bacteria** are used in some vaccines, such as the influenza vaccine. These vaccines are safe, even in people with weakened immune systems.
- 3. Toxoid vaccines**, such as the diphtheria or tetanus vaccines, contain a toxin or chemical made by the bacteria or virus. They make you immune to the harmful effects of the infection rather than the infection itself.
- 4. Biosynthetic vaccines** contain human-made substances that the immune system thinks are infectious organisms. The Hib (Haemophilus influenza type B) conjugate vaccine is one example.



A Closer Look at Immunizations for Children

Concerns or questions about childhood immunizations?

Many parents are concerned that some vaccines are not safe for their children. But a baby's immune system is designed to make antibodies to as many as 10,000 foreign proteins. If a baby were to receive all 11 available vaccines at once, this would engage only a tiny fraction of the immune system.

Mercury

A small amount of mercury (called thimerosal) is a common preservative in multi-dose vaccines. Despite concerns, thimerosal-containing vaccines have NOT been shown to cause autism or ADHD. Nevertheless, if you have concerns about mercury, all of the routine vaccines are also available without added thimerosal.

Immunization Schedule

The recommended immunizations schedule is updated at least every 12 months by organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics. Consult your primary care provider about specific immunizations for you or your child. The current



recommendations are available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines. At every doctor visit, ask about the next recommended immunizations.

Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Immunizations must be given as an injection (shot). The following tips can help make the experience easier for your child:

- Tell older children that the shot is needed to keep them safe and healthy. Knowing what to expect ahead of time may reassure the child.
- Explain to the child that it is OK to cry, but suggest that the child try to be brave. Explain that you do not like injections either, but you try to be brave, too. Praise the child after the injection is over, whether or not he or she cries.
- Distract the child at the moment of the injection. For example, point out a picture on the wall, have them count or say their "ABCs," or tell them something funny.
- Try to be calm. The child will notice if you cringe before the shot!
- Plan something fun to do afterward. A trip to the park, eating out, or other entertainment after the shot can make the next one less scary.

Some health care providers recommend giving your child one dose of acetaminophen (Tylenol) just before the vaccine is administered. This may help avoid common, minor side effects. After the shot is given, a warm, damp cloth or a heating pad placed on the vaccine site may help reduce soreness. Frequently moving or using the arm or leg that has received the shot is also recommended to help reduce the soreness.



Source4Women Online Seminar

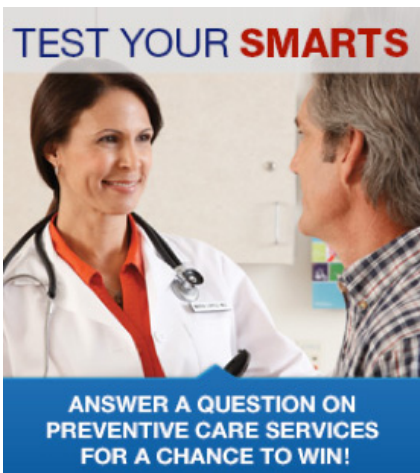
Life Changes Worth Making

Audrey Thomas, Organized Audrey

August 9, 2016, 12:30 p.m. ET, 11:30 a.m. CT, 10:30 a.m. MT, 9:30 a.m. PT

You may have heard it said, "It's the little things in life." And perhaps you may have asked yourself, "Why can't life be easier?" Well, you may enjoy those little things at the same time you make your life simpler and easier. It will take some effort on your part to help challenge your thought process in regards to the things that could be reduced or changed in order to bring simplification to your life. This seminar will explore some key practices to put into place as well as suggestions for doing things differently that may all add up to a calmer, more stress-free life. Some changes in life may be worth making!

To register for an upcoming Source4Women online seminar, visit www.source4women.com and click on "Online Seminars & Events." All seminars are recorded and archived for viewing after the live seminar date.



Test Your Health Care Knowledge

Test your health care knowledge with our August activities:

1. Take a quiz and learn about preventive care.
2. Play the concentration game and match common health care benefit terms with their definitions.
3. Watch a video on "Using Your Benefits" and take a poll.

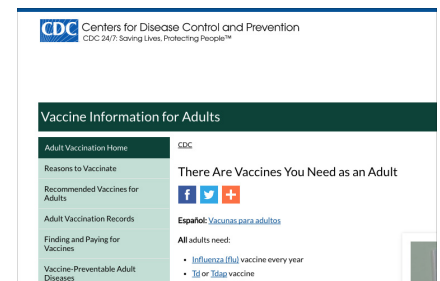
Participate in one or more of the activities for a chance to win a \$400 Visa gift card!

Click [here](#) to get started!

August Health Tip

Immunizations aren't just for children! Each year the CDC posts recommended adult immunizations on their website. [Click here](#) to learn about tetanus booster shots, the flu shot, hepatitis A and B vaccines, the pneumococcal vaccine, MMR, and immunizations for chickenpox and meningitis.

The CDC website also gives travelers detailed information on immunizations and other precautions. Many immunizations should be obtained at least a month before travel. Remember to take your immunization records with you when you travel internationally as some countries require this documentation.



August Healthy Recipe: Cumin-Spiced Flank Steak with Grape Tomato Salsa

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup couscous
- 2 small red bell peppers, cut into 2-in. strips
- 1 small yellow bell pepper, cut into 2-in. strips
- 2 jalapeño peppers, halved lengthwise (seeded if desired)
- 1 cup grape tomatoes
- 1 small yellow onion, cut into 1/2-in. wedges
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 1 1/2-lb flank steak (about 3/4-in. thick)
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder (optional)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice, plus wedges for serving



Preparation:

Heat broiler. Cook the couscous according to package directions.

Meanwhile, on a large rimmed baking sheet, toss the peppers, tomatoes, onion, 1 Tbsp oil and 1/4 tsp each salt and pepper. Broil, tossing once, until the vegetables are tender and slightly charred, 10 to 12 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat the remaining Tbsp oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Season the steak with the cumin, chili powder (if using), and 1/2 tsp each salt and pepper, and cook to desired doneness, 5 to 6 minutes per side for medium-rare. Let rest for at least 5 minutes before slicing.

Transfer the onions and jalapeños to a cutting board; roughly chop and transfer to a bowl. Add the broiled tomatoes and lime juice and mix to combine. Serve the steak and bell peppers over the couscous and top with the tomato salsa. Serve with lime wedges, if desired.

Yield: 4 servings

Nutrition Facts:

- Calories: 420
- Fat: 15g
- Saturated Fat: 5g
- Cholesterol: 95mg
- Sodium: 443mg
- Carbohydrates: 29g
- Dietary Fiber: 4g
- Protein: 40g

Source: The Food Editors of *Woman's Day* Magazine

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